



**Child and Family Services Review
District of Columbia
Summary of Findings**

February 2002

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Region III**

INTRODUCTION

A review of the District of Columbia's child and family services programs was completed pursuant to section 1123A of the Social Security Act (Act) and Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 1355.31 through 1355.37. These sections charge the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the review of such programs. The purpose of the review is to determine the State's substantial conformity with State plan requirements and other requirements under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.

The Child and Family Services Review in the District of Columbia covered the range of child and family services programs funded through titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. It evaluated seven specific safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for services delivered to children and families. In addition to reviewing for case outcomes, the review also examined seven systemic factors that affect the District's capacity to deliver services in a manner that promotes positive outcomes for children and families.

During the period under review, the Child and Family Services Agency had responsibility for neglect cases while the Metropolitan Police Department and the Court Social Services Division had responsibility for abuse cases. In this bifurcated approach, only the Metropolitan Police Department had the authority to remove children from their homes for abuse and determine the need for out of home placement. The Court Social Services Division would then provide all services to ensure the well-being of the abused child and to stabilize and/or reunify the family as quickly as possible. In the event that foster care placement became necessary, the Court Social Services Division would relinquish responsibility for the child and transfer the case to the Child and Family Services Agency.

The first phase of the Child and Family Services Review consisted of the development of a State Profile, derived from data for Federal Fiscal Year 1999 contained in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and for calendar year 1999 from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). This profile highlighted key performance indicators related to safety and permanency for children in the child welfare system. From the profile and other sources of information, the District of Columbia developed a Statewide Assessment, which described the processes, procedures and policies of its child protective services, foster care and adoption programs. This assessment also focused on the systemic factors that are in place, which enable the District to carry out these processes, procedures, and policies.

The second phase of the review involved an on-site review of 50 cases, drawn at random, of children who were active in the child welfare system during the period under review (April 1, 2000 through July 29, 2001). This phase of the review, conducted during the week of July 29, 2001, assessed the quality of services provided and verified the information contained in the State Profile and Statewide Assessment on an individual foster care and protective services case basis.

Forty-two reviewers and team leaders, operating in two-person (State/Federal) teams, reviewed and rated the services provided to these children and their families in relationship to safety, permanency, and well-being. The ratings were derived from documentation in the case records, as well as from interviews with those involved with the cases, such as parents, caseworkers, foster parents, service providers, and, when appropriate, children themselves.

Individual and group interviews were also held with stakeholders who have knowledge and experience with the child and family services system in the District to assess the quality and efficacy of the systemic factors described in the Statewide Assessment. These interviews included discussions with service providers, casework staff, foster parents, agency attorneys, Guardians Ad Litem, and representatives from agencies and organizations such as the Department of Mental Health, Metropolitan Police Department, Administrative Review Unit, Mayor's Office, Department of Education, Superior Court, Citizen's Review Board, and other community partners.

The results of the Statewide Assessment, the on-site case reviews and the stakeholder interviews were compiled by the review team and used to make a determination about the District's substantial conformity with regard to each of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. This report summarizes the information obtained from the review pertaining to each outcome and systemic factor, and the performance indicators used to evaluate them.

In order for the State to be determined to be in substantial conformity on any given outcome, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the cases reviewed. In addition, the State must meet the national standard that has been established for any statewide aggregate data attached to that particular outcome. The Administration for Children and Families Regional Office will be working with the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that addresses the areas found to not be in substantial conformity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child and Family Services Review process examines seven major child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being from a randomly selected sample of cases. It also examines the level of functioning of seven systemic factors, primarily on the basis of interviews with key community and agency stakeholders. Of the District's child welfare programs, the review determined that the District was operating in substantial conformity with applicable Federal requirements on one of the seven major outcomes and with four of the systemic factors.

To assist readers in interpreting the findings of the reviews, it is important to note that the District of Columbia's child welfare system has been the subject of a number of other evaluations, some of which have focused on specific areas of practice. Conversely, the Child and Family Services Review is broad in its coverage of child welfare programs, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, rather than targeted to any one specific area. The review also limits its examination of outcomes and systemic factors to a specific time period. In the case of the District, that time period was April 1, 2000 to July 29, 2001. The results reflect both the randomness of the case sample and the breadth of the review. It is intended to provide insight into the interrelated outcomes and systemic factors under review. With a strong focus on developing program improvement plans that are based on the results of the reviews, the process strives to identify not only areas needing improvement, but also the strengths within programs upon which meaningful plans for improvement can be developed.

Among the individual items rated as strengths were the District's timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment and the lack of repeat maltreatment in the cases reviewed (both pertaining to safety outcome 1). For children in foster care, the review also found several individual strengths in the District's efforts to preserve the continuity of family relationships and connections, place children in proximity to their families and with their siblings when possible, preserve important connections for the children, and utilize relatives as placement resources (all pertaining to permanency outcome 2). Similarly, the review documented significant strengths in four of the seven systemic factors reviewed: the District's quality assurance system, service array, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

The Review identified needs for improvement in the areas of safely maintaining children in their own homes wherever possible and appropriate (both pertaining to safety outcome 2), providing children with permanency and stability in their living situations (permanency outcome 1), visiting with parents and siblings in foster care and maintaining the relationship of children in care with their parents (both pertaining to permanency outcome 2), and in all three child well-being outcomes: that families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs, that children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs, and that children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. Additionally, the systemic factors of statewide information system, case review system, and training are areas noted as being in need of improvement.

Presented below is a synopsis of the Review findings.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

In nine of the ten applicable cases reviewed for this item, staff initiated investigations of reports of child maltreatment within the District's timeframes. The remaining 40 cases did not involve reports of abuse or neglect during the period under review. The case record review found that significant efforts were made to respond in a timely manner to reports of abuse and neglect received after hours.

Item 2. Repeat Maltreatment

No reports of repeat maltreatment were found in the forty-five case records examined, for which this item was applicable, during the period under review (April 2000 to July 29, 2001). However, twenty of the cases that were reviewed had a history of repeat maltreatment, most involving the same perpetrators and/or general complaint, over the life of the cases.

Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Substantial Conformity

Ninety-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for repeat maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Item 3. Services To Families to Protect Children in Their Homes and Prevent Removal

The case record review found a wide array of placement prevention services are available throughout the District to families in an effort to keep children from being inappropriately removed from their homes, including Families Together, crisis intervention, parenting classes, connecting families to Collaboratives, and the use of court-ordered services. However, in some of the cases reviewed, services were provided to address the initially identified problem, but not the potential underlying causes of the problems, such as domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, continued educational neglect or sexual abuse. The Agency provided services to families but did not always monitor whether change occurred as a result of the services.

Item 4. Risk of Harm to Child

The case record review found a general lack of family, safety, and/or risk assessments. When the structured decision making instrument was used by Agency workers, it was not always completed in a way that showed thoughtful and careful consideration of the risk of harm to the child and the family's needs. In some cases workers missed important issues that were the cause of many of the problems such as substance abuse or mental illness. Eighty-six percent of the cases rated as needing improvement for this item were in-home protective services cases rather than foster care cases.

Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S2.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Item 5. Foster Care Re-Entries

No foster care re-entries occurred in the cases reviewed during the period under review. The review found that once children were in foster care they remained in care. Conversely, the Agency's aggregate data (22.26%) did not meet the national standard (8.6%) for the number of children who re-entered foster care within twelve months of a prior foster care episode.

Item 6. Stability of Foster Care Placements

The case record review showed many children experienced stable placements during the period under review. Children with mental health needs and emotional/behavioral problems however, generally experienced more placement disruptions than children without these issues. Although the District exceeded the national standard (DC = 94.66%, national standard = 86.7%) for children who have had no more than two placement settings within twelve months of the latest home removal, the case record review rated 29 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement.

Item 7. Permanency Goals for Children

Little evidence was found in the cases reviewed that showed the Agency is consistently petitioning to terminate the parental rights of parents whose children have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. Of the foster care cases reviewed, 54 percent of the children who were in care longer than 15 months did not have parental rights terminated and compelling reasons for not terminating parental rights were not documented in the case plan or court order. Children in the sample were in care an average of approximately 65 months before they achieved their permanency plan or were still in placement as of the July 29, 2001 review.

Item 8. Independent Living Services

Independent living assessments and inventories were completed and included in most of the case records reviewed and appropriate independent living services were developed based on the individual needs of the youth. In some of the cases reviewed, there was a lack of coordination between the Agency and the independent living provider. The review also found that in the cases reviewed, only one foster parent was engaged in helping to teach independent living skills to the youth in her care.

Item 9. Adoption

Stakeholder interviews indicated that the increase in the number of adoption finalizations in the past two years is due to an increase in adoption by relatives and foster parents of the children to whom they have been providing care. However, the review found that adoption was not considered soon enough in some cases where it was readily apparent that children could not be reunified with their families. Although the District exceeded the national standard (DC = 39.01%, national standard = 32.0%) for children who exited care to a finalized adoption in less than twenty-four months from the time of the latest removal, the case record review rated 37.5 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement.

Item 10. Permanency Goals of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements

In many of the cases reviewed, the Agency attempted to establish more permanent goals for children, such as adoption and reunification, before changing the permanency goal to independent living or emancipation. In some cases reviewed, however, there was no indication that adoption, kinship care, or legal guardianship was considered as permanency options or appropriately ruled out for children. In some cases, reunification should have been dismissed early on as not an appropriate permanency goal so that another goal could have been achieved rather than simply letting children age out of the system.

Status of Permanency Outcome P1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Fifty-four percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for stability of foster care placements and length of time to achieve adoption. The Agency showed strengths in foster care re-entries and stability of foster care placements, however the review found that efforts need to be increased in permanency planning for children in the care of the Child and Family Services Agency.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Item 11. Proximity of Foster Care Placements

In 96 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, proximity of foster care placements was rated as a strength. While children may have been placed in the surrounding States of Maryland and Virginia, 87 percent were placed with their relatives and/or foster parents where they had strong family and neighborhood ties.

Item 12. Placement with Siblings

The District generally made efforts to place siblings together at the initial placement. While not all children in the sibling group were together in the same placement, the review found that more than half of the cases reviewed had children placed with at least one other sibling.

Item 13. Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

Interviews with parents, children, and foster parents indicated that the Agency facilitated frequent visitation between parents and siblings in foster care when the child's permanency goal was reunification. However, there was a general lack of visitation documentation in the case records.

Item 14. Preserving Connections

Ninety-two percent of the cases that were rated as a strength for this item indicated that children in foster care had some type of continued contact with their family. In addition to contact between children and their families through visitations, other means of contact were utilized such as letters, telephone calls, and e-mails.

Item 15. Relative Placements

The District sought out and considered relatives as placement resources in 75 percent of the cases reviewed. Fictive kin, such as godparents or family friends were considered as relative placements when relatives were not available or appropriate.

Item 16. Relationship of Children in Care with Their Parents

Several of the cases reviewed showed a strong partnership between foster and biological parents which helped facilitate parent-child relationships. However, in cases in which the parents' whereabouts were reported to be unknown, the Agency made little effort to locate them so that a continuing relationship with their children could be maintained.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P2. The Agency showed strengths in proximity of foster care placements and preserving connections, however the review found that increased efforts should be made in the areas of visitation between children and their parents and siblings and the relationship of children in care with their parents.

III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Item 17. Needs and Services of Children, Parents, & Foster Parents

The case record review found that foster parents were actively involved in obtaining services for the children in their care. In some cases reviewed, there was no thorough assessment of the child's or parents' needs and services were either not provided to children and their families to address these needs or there was no follow through to ensure that services were being provided.

Item 18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

When the Family Group Decision-Making process was used, the review found that it was a significant avenue to involve families in case planning. However, the review identified that the Agency lacks case management/coordination between family, service providers, foster parents, children, caseworkers, judges, and attorneys. In some cases this led to confusion about case plan goals and permanency plans, and in over half of the cases reviewed child and family involvement in case planning needed improvement.

Item 19. Worker Visits with Children

Overall, this item was rated as an area needing improvement in the District. Although worker visits with the child was rated as a strength for a majority of the foster care cases reviewed, contact between the worker and the child was less than monthly in thirty-nine percent of the foster care cases. Of the in-home cases reviewed, fifty-five percent showed that Agency staff made contact with children in their caseloads less frequently than the policy requires. The lack of visitation between the worker and the child was often attributed by stakeholders to the high turnover in staff, high caseloads, and that intake workers were required to keep children on their caseloads after the initial investigation was completed rather than transferring these cases to ongoing workers.

Item 20. Worker Visits with Parents

Some cases reviewed had no worker assigned to the case for various periods of time due to such factors as worker turnover and high caseloads, which accounted for very limited or sporadic contact between the Agency and the family. In 68 percent of the in-home cases and 60 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, in which this item was applicable, visitation between the worker and the parents was made less than monthly.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Forty-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB1. The review found that efforts need to be made in all the areas under this outcome.

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Item 21. Educational Needs of Children

The onsite review found that educational assessments were being completed in foster care cases and that the educational needs of these children were being addressed through services provided in all of the applicable foster care cases reviewed. However, the educational needs of children who were not in foster care were not addressed in 29 percent of the cases reviewed, particularly those children who were often tardy or absent from school on a frequent basis. School records were not found in 45 percent of the in-home cases and 24 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. There was no attention given to education in case planning in 13 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 50 percent of the applicable in-home cases reviewed.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being WB2.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Item 22. Physical Health of Children

Initial health screenings were done for 77 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed. The in-home cases reviewed generally lacked health information in the case records. Thirty percent of the in-home cases reviewed showed a lack of follow-up on the identified health needs of the children. Twenty percent of the in-home cases reviewed had no preventative health care provided. In 53 percent of the in-home cases and 21 percent of the foster care cases reviewed the child had no preventative dental care provided.

Item 23. Mental Health of Children

The review found that initial screenings and psychiatric evaluations were provided to 71 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed and that 77 percent of the foster children had mental health services that appropriately addressed their needs. The review found there was a general lack of mental health services for children who were not in foster care. In 29 percent of the in-home cases reviewed, no assessments or screenings were completed. A need for additional substance abuse treatment services, residential treatment, and placement options for children who needed therapeutic care was also found.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Fifty-five percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB3.

KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

Historical information on cases is not captured in FACES, the District's automated child welfare information system. While the information system appears capable of capturing and producing information on the status of children in foster care, staff do not consistently input data, which contributes to inaccuracies in cases and unreliable information. Workers identified problems with printing information and reports from the system and the system is down frequently.

Status of Statewide Information System – Not in Substantial Conformity

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.

The Family Group Decision-Making process, when done, is a significant avenue to involve parents, extended family and children in case planning. Currently, this process is only used by the Collaboratives. Case planning was not done consistently by Agency staff and case plans were not found in all records. Additionally, not all parties involved in a case were consulted

when developing the case plan, including foster parents and children who are of an age to productively participate.

Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

The Agency has an Administrative Review Unit to conduct case reviews. The review found that administrative reviews are not occurring in a timely manner in all cases. Administrative reviews are often held with only the caseworker and the Administrative Review Unit staff. These reviews typically do not include parents, children, Guardians Ad Litem, or service providers.

Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

Notwithstanding improvements by the Courts to hold permanency hearings every 12 months, not all cases had these hearings within the time frame prescribed by the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Courts generally do not terminate parental rights until an adoptive family has been identified for the child. This practice delays adoptions and reduces the chances or opportunities for some children to be adopted.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

Foster parents, relative caretakers and pre-adoptive parents are not consistently notified of reviews, which indicates there is a breakdown in communication in the pre-administrative review process where it is determined who is to be involved in the review. Similarly, there sometimes is a communication gap in notifying these caregivers and prospective caregivers of the time and place of a hearing until the eleventh hour, if at all.

Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.

The District has developed licensing standards for foster and adoptive placements that regulate the health and safety of children placed in these homes and facilities. The Quality Assurance Unit is charged with monitoring compliance of these licensing standards. The unit identifies changes that should be implemented and develops corrective action plans to remedy deficiencies found in case reviews.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

In some of the cases reviewed, there was nothing in the case record that showed that an administrative review process took place. For example, a system of checks and balances is supposed to be in place where social workers and supervisors go over the case plan, which sometimes also involves parents, and then designated Agency administrative personnel review the process to be sure that the appropriate procedures were followed.

Status of Quality Assurance System – Substantial Conformity

The Agency has a system in place to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. However, the Agency was found to need improvements in their Supervisory Review System's implementation.

VII. TRAINING

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

The comprehensive new worker training curriculum is targeted toward teaching critical child welfare skills. The review found that, in practice, there were significant time lags between the date a new worker is hired and when pre-service training is provided, due to supervisors assigning cases to new workers. Additionally, supervisors often call new workers out of training to handle on-going caseload activities.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

Interviews with Agency staff revealed that the competency-based training for supervisors is not mandatory and, therefore, is not consistently utilized. Interviews with Collaboratives and Agency staff indicated there was a lack of specialized training for staff on the use of risk assessments, case planning, permanency, and engaging families in the child welfare process. Those interviewed attributed this problem to in-service training not being mandatory.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

A comprehensive pre-service training curriculum is provided to all new foster and adoptive parents. The Agency's Foster Parent Resource Unit provides a variety of training sessions for foster and adoptive parents to meet the 15-hour in-service training requirement.

Status of Training – Not in Substantial Conformity

The District was found to have strengths in the area of a training system for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of licensed or approved facilities. The review found a need for improvement in the staff development and training program and on-going training for staff.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

The District has a variety of services available to support children and families, including home based services, Families Together, the Collaboratives, educational advocates, independent living services, etc. Interviews with stakeholders indicated there was a general lack of mental health services, services to transition youth from residential care to community-based placements, and services for children with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.

Services provided by the Community Collaboratives are available in all four quadrants of the city, which makes them readily accessible to clients through the District's comprehensive public transportation system. In addition, some of the Collaboratives have vans to transport clients to appointments.

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

The Community Collaboratives individualize services to meet the specific needs of their families. They utilize individualized assessments to develop services plans that meet the needs of the children and families they serve. However, the review found that the Agency sometimes offers a set of services to all families rather than individualizing services to meet the specific needs of their clients.

Status of Service Array – Substantial Conformity

The review found that the District provides services in all areas of the City and that these services can be individualized to meet the needs of the children and families served by the Agency. However, the review found there was a general lack of specific services to meet the targeted needs of some of the Agency's clients, especially in terms of substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and housing.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

The community is an integral part of developing and implementing the provisions of the Agency's Child and Family Services Plan. Stakeholders indicated that the Community Collaboratives participate in planning and coordinating local services as specified in the Plan. As part of the Agency's planning process for the Annual Progress and Services Report, the Collaboratives have input into establishing goals and objectives for the following year. Additionally, Citizens Review Panel members, which consists of citizens, para-professionals, community activists, and public and private organizations, assisted with the development of the Child and Family Services Plan.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.

Outside public and private agencies are engaged in contributing to the Annual Progress and Services Report for Title IV-B. The eight Community Collaboratives report to the Agency annually on services they provided and identify service needs in the community.

Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

Stakeholder interviews revealed that the Agency needs to better coordinate with Medicaid, mental health, and services provided to individuals with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community – Substantial Conformity

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of engaging in on-going consultation with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the court, and other agencies in implementing provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan. In addition, the Agency develops annual reports of progress and services with input from these stakeholders. The Child and Family Services Agency needs to better coordinate with external agencies such as Medicaid, mental health, and Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities providers.

X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and childcare institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

The Agency currently licenses foster homes and certifies adoptive homes using standards that conform to nationally recognized requirements.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

Interviews with stakeholders and foster parents confirmed that standards for foster homes are equally applied to all homes, including relatives who are providing care for the District's children.

- Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.**

Interviews with Agency staff, stakeholders, and the Foster Parent Support Unit confirmed that local criminal background checks as well as Federal Bureau of Investigation background checks are completed for all homes.

- Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.**

The Agency has implemented several programs to recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care. These programs include One Church, One Child to recruit African-American families through the faith community; My Community, My Child developed by Casey Family Services to recruit foster and adoptive families in the communities in which children are from; the Community Awareness and Recruitment Summit held by local foster parents to educate the community and recruit prospective parents; and the AKIN (All Kids In Need) program that provides support for kinship, foster and adoptive families.

- Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.**

The Agency routinely places children for adoption in surrounding states because of the limited availability of adoptive families in the District.

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention – Substantial Conformity

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of implementing standards for foster homes and childcare institutions; equally applying standards to all approved foster homes and childcare institutions; ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care; and for effectively using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FORM

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.						
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	13	9	11	12	46	97.87%
Partially Achieved:	0	0	0	0	0	--
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	1	0	1	2.17%
Not Applicable:	0	3	0	1	3	--
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:						
	National Standard	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard		
Repeat Maltreatment	6.1%	4.71%	X			
Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care	0.57%	0%	X			

Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 9 (90.00%)

Areas Needing Improvement: 1 (10.00%)

Not Applicable: 40

Basis: Statewide Assessment

To improve the intake process, the Child and Family Services Agency established a single reporting line for all allegations of abuse and neglect in 1999. Hotline workers give priority to child protective services referrals through the use of a structured safety assessment and decision-making instrument that assigns a level of risk and an appropriate response time to each case accepted for assessment and investigation. A Level I risk requires an immediate response to the allegation; a Level II risk requires a response by staff within 12 hours; and a Level III risk requires a response by staff within 16 to 24 hours. Additional

staff were allocated to the Intake Program to assure that sufficient employees were available to receive and investigate reports. The District also launched a public awareness campaign in 1999 to publicize the new child safety reporting number, 671-SAFE.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- In nine of the ten applicable cases reviewed for this item, staff initiated investigations of reports of child maltreatment within the District's timeframes. The remaining 40 cases did not involve reports of abuse or neglect during the period under review.
- The case record review found that significant efforts were made to respond in a timely manner to reports of abuse and neglect received after hours.
- Children were seen and interviewed in a timely manner and in accordance with Agency policy.
- Historical case information, when available, showed timely response to reports of maltreatment on a consistent basis.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- With the end of bifurcation, District police will still receive and respond to reports of sexual abuse. Police will determine if the Agency should be involved in a sexual abuse investigation. Historically the Metropolitan Police Department has only involved the Agency when it determined that the perpetrator is to be charged.
- In the one case in which timeliness was rated as an area needing improvement, the investigation did not take place for several months and the first face-to-face contact with the child was made a year after the initial report of abuse and neglect.

Item 2. Repeat Maltreatment

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	45 (100%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	0
Not Applicable:	5

Basis: Statewide Assessment

According to the statewide data indicators, 4.71 percent of children that were the subject of substantiated neglect or abuse had another substantiated report within 6 months.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- No reports of repeat maltreatment were found in the case records examined during the period under review. This accounted for 100 percent of the cases reviewed onsite being rated as a strength on this item.
- Out of the 45 cases reviewed for this item, 28 were cases in which the child was in foster care during the period under review. No incidents of maltreatment in foster care were found in these cases.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Twenty of the forty-five cases that were reviewed had a history of repeat maltreatment, although no reports of repeat maltreatment were found during the period under review. In most of the cases with a history of repeat maltreatment, the allegations involved the same perpetrators and/or general complaint, over the life of the cases. This was most common in families that had a history of substance abuse, chronic neglect, and/or medical and educational neglect. One case had 24 reports of abuse and neglect, many of which were substantiated, with the same major concerns of chronic neglect, substance abuse, mental illness, and educational neglect by the parents.
- Stakeholders identified a concern that some incidents of maltreatment in open cases were not investigated as separate occurrences, but handled as another episode within the case.

Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Substantial Conformity

Ninety-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for repeat maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.						
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	11	10	8	4	33	70.21%
Partially Achieved:	1	0	0	2	3	6.38%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	2	4	4	11	23.41%
Not Applicable:	0	0	0	3	3	--

Item 3. Services To Families to Protect Children in Their Homes and Prevent Removal

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 16 (59.26%)
Areas Needing Improvement: 11 (40.74%)
Not Applicable: 23

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The Child and Family Services Agency begins service provision during the investigation phase of a case that is geared to preventing exacerbation of risks to children. The agency provides or refers families to a wide array of services designed to prevent out of home placements including such services as intensive home-based crisis intervention; 24 hour a day homemaker services; parent education/counseling; mental health services; substance abuse treatment; housing assistance; respite care; day care; emergency cash assistance; access to other public benefits; less intensive family services; and medical services. Pre-placement preventive services to children and families are provided through several strategic programs including: the use of a community-based service delivery system that includes the city's eight Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives and the Ferebee Hope Community Services Center; use of the Family Services Program that provides a full spectrum of services, such as parenting classes and housing/homemaker services designed to preserve and support at-risk families.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The case record review found that a wide array of placement prevention services are available throughout the District to families in an effort to keep children from being inappropriately removed from their homes. These services include Families Together, crisis intervention, parenting classes, connecting families to collaboratives, and the use of court-ordered services.
- The “social investigations” completed in Court Social Services’ cases reflected thorough and comprehensive assessments of needs. These assessments were used to establish service plans for families.
- Services in the 59 percent of the cases in which this item was rated as a strength were considered to be comprehensive and appropriate to the level of risk. These included parenting classes, counseling, day care, intensive family preservation, health and mental health evaluations, educational services, and case management among others.

Areas Needing Improvement:

This item was rated as an area needing improvement in approximately 41 percent of the cases reviewed onsite due to the following:

- In some of the cases reviewed, services were provided to address the initially identified problem, but not the potential underlying causes of the problems such as domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, continued educational neglect or sexual abuse. In these cases, families were not provided the opportunity to receive services to address these issues.
- The Agency provided services to families but did not always monitor whether change occurred as a result of the services. In addition, service providers often did not complete thorough reports that assessed the parents’ progress. In these cases Agency staff were not able to determine if services were actually being provided to the family after the referral was made or if the services actually benefited the family and addressed the problems which led to the report of abuse/neglect.
- The review found a lack of ability of some staff to engage parents in treatment. In some cases services continued to be provided even when the family was not engaged with the provider or even participating in the services.
- In one case there was a three-month delay from the time of the initial referral to the investigation of abuse/neglect, which caused the children to remain in an unsafe situation.
- In a few cases, there was no formal risk or safety assessment completed by the worker and children were removed without any exploration of placement prevention services when these services may have been appropriate.

Item 4. Risk of Harm to Child

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	33 (70.21%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	14 (29.79%)
Not Applicable:	3

Basis: Statewide Assessment

A standardized structured risk assessment tool was implemented in 1999. Hotline staff now use this structured safety assessment and decision making instrument to assign a level of risk and an appropriate response time to each case accepted for assessment and investigation. Information gathered from this assessment is then utilized along with other information to develop the safety plan and family assessment if the investigation leads to the opening of a case. The family's service plan is then developed based on the findings of these assessments.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- In 26 of the 47 cases reviewed for this item, the children were in foster care during the period under review. In these cases, the risk of harm was managed through the foster care placement, as opposed to addressing the risk of harm while children were in their own homes. All but two of these 26 cases were rated as a strength.
- The case record review and discussions with stakeholders showed that the District intervened to remove children when appropriate and necessary in most cases.
- When children were in placement, the Agency was found to eventually change the permanency goals from reunification to a more appropriate permanency option such as adoption or long-term foster care if parents were not making progress in dealing with the issues for which the children were removed.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Risk of harm was rated as an area needing improvement in 30 percent of the cases reviewed onsite due to the following factors:

- The case record review found a general lack of family, safety, and/or risk assessments. When the structured decision making instrument was used by Agency workers it was not always completed in a way that showed thoughtful and careful consideration of the risk of harm to the child and the family's needs. In some cases workers missed important issues that were the cause of many of the problems such as substance abuse or mental illness. These major problems were identified by the family or service provider during the case record review in 8 of the 14 cases rated as areas needing improvement for this item.
- Eighty-six percent of the cases rated as areas needing improvement for the risk of harm item were in-home protective services cases rather than foster care cases.
- The Agency provided services to families but did not always monitor whether change occurred as a result of the services. In addition, service providers often did not complete thorough reports that assessed the parents' progress. In these cases Agency staff were not able to determine if services were actually being provided to the family after the referral was made or if the services actually benefited the family and addressed the problems which led to the report of abuse/neglect.
- Risk assessments were not conducted throughout the life of a case to continuously evaluate the risk of harm to the children throughout the time of the Agency's intervention.

Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S2.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.						
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	5	5	4	1	15	53.57%
Partially Achieved:	2	5	3	3	13	46.43%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0	0	0	0	--
Not Applicable:	6	2	5	9	22	--
Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:						
	National Standard	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard		
Foster care re-entries	8.6%	22.26%		X		
Length of time to achieve reunification	76.2%	62.84%		X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	32.0%	39.01%	X			
Stability of foster care placements	86.7%	94.66%	X			
Length of stay in foster care*	--	--	--	--		

*Not used to determine substantial conformity.

Item 5. Foster Care Re-Entries

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 28 (100%)
 Areas Needing Improvement: 0
 Not Applicable: 22

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The District is carefully reviewing re-entries into foster care. In 1999, 22.26 percent of the children entering care had a previous entry into foster care within the prior 12 months. The legal process for bringing children into agency care may have impacted the percentage of re-entries. District law allows for children to be placed with relatives or family friends in what are termed “private placements.” At the initial court hearing, usually held the day after a child has been placed in the agency’s care, there was often pressure to release the child into a private placement setting. Due to factors such as the lack of police and child abuse clearances, inability to quickly complete the process to provide financial support for the child, and caretaker non-compliance with Court orders, these placements failed. The children were then returned to agency foster care.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- No foster care re-entries occurred in the cases during the period under review which resulted in rating this item as a strength for all of the cases. The review found that once children were in foster care they remained in care.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- In the District, the case record reviews showed that children are maintained in foster care for long periods of time without achieving their permanency goals and, consequently did not experience frequent multiple entries into foster care. Children whose cases were reviewed were in care an average of approximately 65 months before they achieved their permanency plan. Most of these children were still in placement as of July 2001.
- Approximately 20 percent of the foster care cases reviewed had a history of foster care re-entries although none were found for the period under review.
- The District does not meet the National Standard for Foster Care Re-entries. The Agency re-ran the 1999 FOCUS data and determined the percentage had not changed. They then ran additional 2000 FACES data and determined they would meet the national standard if the 2000 FACES data was substituted for the 1999 FOCUS data. The Agency was required to submit AFCARS data for 2000 based on the 2000 FACES data. However, the data appeared to be incomplete or inaccurate. Since programmatic explanations for the data could not be provided, this indicator was rated as an area in need of improvement.

Item 6. Stability of Foster Care Placements

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	20 (71.43%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	8 (28.57%)
Not Applicable:	22

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The District exceeded the national standard for children who have had no more than two placement settings with 94.66 percent of children placed less than 12 months from the time of the latest home removal having no more than two placement settings. In 1998, 90.53 percent of children placed had no more than two placement settings during the first 12 months following home removal. There is a core group of children in the District's foster care population that move frequently. Since children may remain agency wards until their 21st birthday, the foster care population includes many older adolescents who are difficult to place and sometimes unwilling to utilize available services. The District has implemented several changes to improve foster care stability including the initiation of the Kinship Care Program; contracting for a comprehensive therapeutic home program to serve and stabilize 500 children; and the implementation of the Abscondence Unit to locate run-away children and re-integrate them back into the community.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The case record review showed many children experienced stable placements during the period under review. The majority of placement changes during the period under review were initiated to meet the permanency and well-being needs of the children involved such as placement in an adoptive home or an independent living apartment.
- According to stakeholder interviews, placement stability was enhanced through supports provided to foster parents by the Agency's Foster Parent Support Unit.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Twenty-nine percent of the foster care cases reviewed were rated as areas needing improvement for stability of foster care placements due to the following:

- The case record review found that children with mental health needs and emotional/behavioral problems generally experienced more placement disruptions than children without these issues.
- The Agency does not routinely assess the appropriateness of a placement on a continuous basis to assure the placement continues to meet the needs of the child.
- While the case record review found that most placements were stable for the period under review, there were ten cases in which children were moved a number of times before the review period. For example, in one case a child had eight different placements in three years.
- The cases reviewed demonstrated placement stability absent permanency. While some children tended to be in the same placement for a long period of time, these children did not achieve their permanency goals. Children were in care an average of approximately 65 months before they achieved their permanency plan. Most of these children were still in placement as of July 2001.
- Although the District exceeded the national standard for children who have had no more than two placement settings within twelve months of the latest home removal, the case record review rated 29 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement. Since no request was made for a review of additional cases, this item was rated as an area needing improvement.

Item 7. Permanency Goals for Children

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	17 (60.71%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	11 (39.29%)
Not Applicable:	22

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The case planning process which includes the child's permanency plan, utilized by the Child and Family Services Agency staff, outlines the goals, objectives, and tasks which clients, workers and others involved with the case are required to utilize in moving the case through the child welfare system. A review of agency case records in 1999 found that 70 percent of the cases had case plans, while another review in 2001 found that, out of the 1584 foster care cases reviewed, 75 percent had current case plans. Timeliness in the achievement of permanency for children has been a long-standing issue in the District's child welfare system. Staff shortages; resultant high caseloads; failure to complete focused, written case plans; as well as legal impediments, including the lack of legal staff to file motions for termination of parental rights; have served to keep children in care. Efforts to improve timely movement toward the termination of parental rights and the achievement of permanency for children have included the successful implementation of the Diligent Search Unit to locate absent parents and relatives; a new initiative to co-locate corporation counsel with agency staff; implementation of the DC Superior Administrative Order which established a new case processing system for handling new cases and the Remedial Project which reviews and makes recommendations for permanency outcomes in cases that have been pending for two years. Implementation of the Permanency Staffing Panel has addressed the quality of social work practice and ensures that cases do not linger and permanency decisions are made early on. Efforts to place more children with relatives led to growth in the Kinship Care Program. Passage of subsidized legal guardianship legislation has provided children and families with another permanency option. An administrative order required all judges to review their child abuse and neglect cases and to conduct permanency hearings for all cases where 18 months had passed since the entry of the order of abuse and neglect.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The District's subsidized guardianship program for relatives gives children in the custody of the Agency another option by which to achieve permanency.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Of the foster care cases reviewed, 39 percent were rated as an area needing improvement for this item for the following reasons:

- Little evidence was found in the cases reviewed that showed the Agency is consistently petitioning to terminate the parental rights of parents of children who have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. Of the foster care cases reviewed, 54 percent of the children who were in care longer than 15 months did not have parental rights terminated and compelling reasons for not terminating parental rights were not documented in the case plan or court order.

- Permanency goals were not documented in case plans or court orders for many of the foster care cases reviewed. In three cases, no permanency goal was identified for the child at all.
- Overall, the case record review found a general lack of permanency planning. Permanency planning appeared to be something that took place whenever there was a court hearing or administrative review. It did not seem to be integrated as an ongoing process in working with children and families.
- Services were not monitored in many cases to determine if parents had improved in order for reunification to take place.
- In some cases reviewed, the goal of adoption was identified for a child but efforts were not always made by the staff to achieve this goal through such actions as seeking termination of parental rights.
- Independent living became the permanency goal for 13 children over 17 years of age who had been in the system for several years so that adoption was no longer appropriate. There was no explanation in many of these cases as to why another permanency option such as adoption had not occurred at an earlier date.
- Although many children had reunification as their permanency goal, prior to the period under review, only three children whose cases were reviewed had reunification as their permanency goal as of the July 2001 review.
- Concurrent planning did not occur in cases where children had the permanency goal of reunification. Children often lingered in the system for years while waiting for their parents to improve rather than the Agency moving toward termination of parental rights and adoption at the 15 month mark.
- Providers often had a permanency goal for a child they served that was different from the goal developed by the Agency. This confusion led to provider staff and Agency staff working at cross-purposes in some cases.
- Children were in care an average of approximately 65 months before they achieved their permanency plan or were still in placement as of the July 2001 review.

Item 8. Independent Living Services

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	7 (53.85%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	6 (46.15%)
Not Applicable:	37

Basis: Statewide Assessment

No information was provided.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Independent living assessments and inventories were completed and included in the case records reviewed.
- Appropriate independent living services were developed based on the individual needs of the youth.
- According to stakeholder interviews, youth are often allowed to stay in their apartments after they have been emancipated.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 46 percent of the foster care cases reviewed the Independent Living Services item was rated as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- In five of the cases reviewed there was a lack of coordination between the Agency and the independent living provider. This resulted in the youth having two separate and different Independent Living plans and goals.
- The case record review found that only one foster parent was engaged in helping to teach independent living skills to the youth in their care.
- In all of the cases reviewed for this item, independent living services seemed to be provided only when a youth reached the age of 17 and had been in care for an extended period of time and staff believed that adoption and reunification were no longer viable permanency options.
- Five of the cases reviewed did not have an individual independent living plan for the youth and in two cases no independent living services were provided.

Item 9. Adoption

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 5 (62.50%)

Areas Needing Improvement: 3 (37.50%)

Not Applicable: 42

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Improvement in providing permanency for children in foster care is demonstrated in the dramatic increase in the number of adoptions finalized in 1999 and 2000. The District experienced its most significant increase in finalized adoptions last year with 40 percent growth in the number of foster children adopted. In FY 1998, the Adoption Resource Program finalized 168 adoptions; in 1999 it finalized 250 adoptions; and in 2000, the number of adoptions finalized rose to 330. It is the goal of the program to finalize 400 adoptions in FY 2001. Children placed in foster care as abandoned babies exit the system within 24 months. The court system and the agency have devised a tracking system to ensure that these cases are processed expeditiously. Approximately 39 percent of children who exited foster care through finalized adoption spent less than 24 months in care from the time of removal.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Stakeholder interviews indicated that the increase in the number of adoption finalizations in the past two years is due to an increase in adoption by relatives and foster parents of the children to whom they have been providing care.
- In an effort to decrease the barriers to timely adoptions, the Agency and the court have recently implemented activities designed to terminate parental rights for children have been in foster care for 15 months. Although termination of parental rights proceedings were not a priority in the District until an adoptive family was identified by the Agency for a child, stakeholders indicated that the District is making a concerted effort to reverse this practice.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Adoption was rated as an area needing improvement in 37.5 percent of the foster care cases reviewed for the following reasons:

- The process involved in implementing the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children between the Agency and its neighboring states of Virginia and Maryland have created delays in the timely finalization of adoption for children placed outside the District.
- Because District and Maryland foster parents are not certified as adoptive parents at the same time they are certified as foster parents, they must go through another approval process if they wish to adopt a child placed in their home. This secondary approval process creates numerous delays in the adoption process.
- Many judges in the District require that an adoptive parent must be available and ready to adopt the child before they will consider terminating parental rights. Because the adoption proceeding often takes place at the same time as the termination

of parental rights action, the child's biological parents still have the right to appeal the termination of parental rights ruling after the adoption is finalized. According to stakeholders, some adoptive parents are unwilling to pursue adoption because of this risk.

- The length of time to exhaust appeals of termination of parental rights actions created delays of up to two years in some of the adoption cases reviewed.
- Adoption was not always considered soon enough in some cases where it was readily apparent that children could not be reunified with their families. This caused some children to wait an extended period of time before an adoptive family was sought or adoption was ruled out because the child was older. In one case reviewed it took six years for an adoption to be finalized.
- Concurrent planning did not occur in cases where children had the permanency goal of reunification. Children often lingered in the system for years while waiting for their parents to improve rather than the Agency moving toward termination of parental rights and adoption at the 15 month mark.
- Although the District exceeded the national standard for children who exited care to a finalized adoption in less than twenty-four months from the time of the latest removal, the case record review rated 37.5 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement. Since no request was made for a review of additional cases, this item was rated as an area needing improvement.

Item 10. Permanency Goals of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	11 (73.34%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	4 (26.67%)
Not Applicable:	35

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Currently, the initial permanency goal for most children in out of home placement is reunification. Case planning toward that end begins during the Intake process and includes informing parents about reunification timelines established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Staff advise parents that if reunification does not occur within 12 months of the child's entry into foster

care, the agency will pursue alternate permanency plans for the child. The District did not meet the national standard for the percentage of children who reunified with their families in less than 12 months. The Kinship Care Program was established in 1998 with the mission to support families caring for relatives' children who have suffered or are at risk for neglect or abuse so that these placements might become permanent. A permanent guardianship program was established to provide subsidies for certain caregivers who become the legal guardians of the children they care for.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- In the cases reviewed, 14 foster children had permanency goals identified as other planned living arrangements such as long-term foster care, emancipation, or independent living. Thirteen of the cases involved older youth between the ages of 17 and 20. In ten of these cases, the Agency attempted to establish more permanent goals for these children such as adoption and reunification, before changing the permanency goals to independent living or emancipation.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Twenty-seven percent of the foster care cases reviewed rated this item as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- In four cases reviewed, there was no indication that adoption, kinship care, or legal guardianship were considered as permanency options or appropriately ruled out for children. In some cases, reunification should have been dismissed early on as not an appropriate permanency goal so that another goal could have been achieved rather than simply letting children age out of the system.
- No compelling reasons were documented for pursuing another planned permanency goal other than reunification, adoption, kinship care, or legal guardianship as required before seeking a different permanency plan in four of the cases reviewed.

Status of Permanency Outcome P1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Fifty-four percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for length of time to achieve adoption and stability of foster care placements. The Agency showed strengths in foster care re-entries and stability of foster care placements, however the review found that efforts need to be made in permanency planning for children in care of the Child and Family Services Agency.

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.						
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	7	7	5	3	22	78.57%
Partially Achieved:	0	2	1	1	4	14.29%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	1	0	2	7.14%
Not Applicable:	6	2	5	9	22	--

Item 11. Proximity of Foster Care Placements

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 23 (95.83%)
Areas Needing Improvement: 1 (4.17%)
Not Applicable: 26

Basis: Statewide Assessment

In the District of Columbia metropolitan area, many foster and adoptive caregivers reside in Maryland and Virginia. The agency entered into several contracts with licensed private child placing agencies in Maryland and Virginia to complete foster, relative, and adoptive home studies. The use of private agencies to license and approve prospective caregivers has significantly reduced the time it would normally take to go through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children process. This initiative has resulted in an increase in the number of children placed into licensed homes outside of DC.

The District is part of a metropolitan area with somewhat fluid borders. A child may live in Maryland with one parent but attend school, receive medical care or visit with the other parent in the District, or vise versa.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- In 96 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, proximity of foster care placements was rated as a strength. While children may have been placed in the surrounding States of Maryland and Virginia, 87 percent were placed with their relatives and/or foster parents where they had strong family and neighborhood ties. In addition, these communities are within the larger Washington DC metropolitan area.
- Older youth in Independent Living placements were placed close to resources such as public transportation, employers, schools, etc.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- While all of the placements reviewed were within the greater Washington DC metropolitan area, many of the foster homes are actually located in Maryland and Virginia. Because of this unique situation, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children process sometimes creates delays in the placement of the Agency's children.
- Stakeholders indicated that the Reception Center located in the Agency's building is an inappropriate placement for children who need an emergency shelter placement.

Item 12. Placement with Siblings

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	19 (79.17%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	5 (20.83%)
Not Applicable:	26

Basis: Statewide Assessment

No information was provided.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The District generally made efforts to place siblings together at the initial placement. While not all children in the sibling group were together in the same placement, the review found that more than half of the cases reviewed had children placed with at least one other sibling.
- In most of the cases reviewed where siblings were not placed together, the decision to place siblings separately was appropriate based on the best interests of the children involved.
- When siblings were separated after the initial placement, the Agency made attempts to facilitate sibling visitation in most of the cases reviewed. The case record review showed that visits often occurred in six cases under these circumstances.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- In approximately 21 percent of the cases reviewed children were not placed with their siblings and no information or reasons were identified in the record.
- If siblings were not initially placed together, there was little attempt made by the Agency to reunify them in these cases according to the case record reviews. This led to siblings being adopted by different families with little connection to each other.
- In 33 percent of the cases reviewed, siblings were separated due to one child's behavioral problems. According to case record interviews these children then remained separated from their siblings with limited contact.
- Seventeen percent of the cases reviewed had too many children to be placed together in one home including one family that had eight siblings in foster care.

Item 13. Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	18 (75.00%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	6 (25.00%)
Not Applicable:	26

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Social workers are expected to ensure that, unless there are reasons for less frequent contact, children and parents in the reunification process have weekly visits in the parent's home or a family-like setting that encourages interaction. During visits, social workers assess the caregiver's parenting skills and, if necessary, teach behavioral alternatives for discipline, communication, and showing affection. The time is used to establish and maintain partnerships among the children, biological parents, foster parents, other caregivers, social workers, and other service providers.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Interviews with parents, children, and foster parents indicated that the Agency facilitated frequent visitation between parents and siblings in foster care when the child's permanency goal was reunification.
- When the Agency did not make visitation arrangements, the case record review found that foster parents, relatives and private agency staff frequently facilitated visitation between siblings, with parents and other relatives.
- In cases where face-to-face visits between children and their parents or other siblings did not occur, the review found that contact was often made through phone calls, letters, e-mail, presents, etc.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 25 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, visiting between parents and siblings in foster care was rated as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- There was a general lack of visitation documentation in the case records.
- The review found three cases in which the parents' whereabouts were reported to be unknown. In these cases, it appeared that the Agency did not make diligent efforts to locate parents even though parental rights had not been terminated and, according to interviews, other family members were able to make contact with the absent parents.
- In the cases reviewed most visitation between parents and their children occurred in the local office rather than in a family-like setting. Stakeholders identified a need for a visitation center to facilitate more natural family-like situations that would facilitate the staff's ability to determine if progress has been made in the interactions between parents and their children.

Item 14. Preserving Connections

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	25 (89.29%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	3 (10.71%)
Not Applicable:	22

Basis: Statewide Assessment

No information was provided.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Preserving connections was rated as a strength in 89 percent of the foster care cases reviewed.
- Ninety-two percent of the cases that were rated as a strength for this item indicated that children in foster care had some type of continued contact with their family. While visitation may not have occurred between children and their parents or siblings, visits often did occur with other relatives including cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. In addition to contact between children and their families through visitations, other means of contact were utilized such as letters, telephone calls, e-mail, etc.
- Case records showed that 25 percent of the children whose cases were reviewed were involved in their communities through activities such as sports, summer camps, church activities, cultural and ethnic events, scouts, and school activities.
- Nineteen children in the review were placed in either their own communities or with relatives whose communities the children most closely identified with. This allowed for the continuation of their connections to their extended families, siblings, schools, and neighborhoods.
- Two of the cases reviewed involved open adoptions which facilitated continued contact between the children adopted and their siblings, parents, and extended families.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The Agency did very little to connect children in foster care with their fathers. There was very little mention of the fathers in the case records in terms of visitation and contact. In four cases this was due to paternity not being established or the whereabouts of the father was not known. In most of the other cases the father was not mentioned at all.

Item 15. Relative Placements

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	24 (85.71%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	4 (14.29%)
Not Applicable:	22

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency established its Kinship Care Program in May 1998. Kinship Care Program staff manage more than half of the agency's out of home cases. The mission of the Program is to support families caring for relatives' children who have suffered or are at risk for neglect or abuse so that these might become permanent placements. In most cases, relative or kinship caregivers have an established relationship with children in their care and with those children's birth parents. Kin view the children more positively and are able to promote higher self-esteem. When placed with relatives, children are more likely to have access to extended family and their home communities. According to the December 1999 Kinship Care Workgroup Report, research has shown that children are more likely to achieve permanency in kinship placements than they are in traditional foster care placements.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The District sought out and considered relatives as placement resources in 75 percent of the cases reviewed.
- Fictive kin, such as godparents or family friends were considered as relative placements when relatives were not available or appropriate. This led to one child being placed in the home of a family friend who became a certified foster parent.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Paternal relatives were not always sought as placement resources because paternity had not been established in some of the cases reviewed.
- Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children was found to be a delay in placing children with relatives in Virginia and Maryland because these cases are not always considered as priorities with receiving States.
- In some cases services that were requested by relative caretakers were not responded to in a timely manner by the Agency.

Item 16. Relationship of Children in Care with Their Parents

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	12 (80.00%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	3 (20.00%)
Not Applicable:	35

Basis: Statewide Assessment

No information was provided.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Several of the cases reviewed showed a strong partnership between foster and biological parents which was reported by stakeholders to help facilitate parent-child relationships.
- The Agency arranged transportation and other support services such as counseling and supervision to facilitate visitation between parents and their children.

Areas Needing Improvement:

The relationship of children in care with their parents was rated as an area needing improvement in 20 percent of the cases reviewed due to the following factors:

- In four cases in which the mother's whereabouts were reported to be unknown, the Agency made little effort to locate them so that a continuing relationship with their children could be maintained.
- The Agency did very little to connect children in foster care with their fathers. There was very little mention of the fathers in the case records in terms of visitation or contact. In four cases this was due to paternity not being established or the whereabouts of the father was not known. In most of the other cases the father was not mentioned at all.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P2. The Agency showed strengths in proximity of foster care placements and preserving connections, however the review found that efforts need to be made in the areas of placement of siblings together and visitation between children and their parents and siblings.

The District of Columbia is a relatively small jurisdiction. The agency is building a community-based service delivery system through the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives located in each of the city's eight wards. To the extent that services exist, they are available to any eligible, needy citizen. The agency submitted a Child Welfare System Emergency Reform Plan to Congress in October 2000. Pursuant to this plan and with the assistance of Chapin Hall, the agency has assessed the capacity of the current contract providers and community-based networks to determine what additional resources and technical assistance are needed to transition more responsibly for direct service casework to the private sector.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The case record review found that foster parents were actively involved in obtaining services for the children in their care.
- Court Social Services cases had strong assessments of families' needs and services were provided to meet those needs.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 48 percent of the cases reviewed, needs and services of children, parents and foster parents was identified as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- Twenty-four percent of the cases in which this item was rated as an area needing improvement did not have thorough assessments of the child's needs while 39 percent of these cases did not have thorough assessments of the parents' needs.
- In 28 percent of the cases rated as an area needing improvement for this item, services were either not provided to children to address their needs or there was no follow through to ensure that services were being provided to children.
- Over 46 percent of the cases that were rated as an area needing improvement for this item did not have services provided to the parent to address the needs of the family or there was no follow through by the parents in the services that were referred to them.
- The case record review identified seven cases where foster parents did not have the support or services necessary from the Agency to provide appropriate care to the children placed in their homes. Agency staff were often inaccessible to foster parents when issues arose.
- In nine of the cases reviewed, the family requested services but either referrals were not made for services or actual services were not provided.
- The review found that there was a general lack of mental health services for children in foster care.

Item 18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	21 (44.68%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	26 (55.32%)
Not Applicable:	3

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Case plans are to reflect the collaborative efforts of the social worker and the family to articulate the dynamics of the family situation. The family is encouraged to be an active partner in this process, when willing and able. Signatures of parents are required on each case plan, which signifies that the parents participated in the process. Any missing signatures or inability to locate parents for case plan development is to be documented on the case plans. Parental involvement in case plan development is tracked through regular supervisory sessions. Effective August 2000, the agency instituted a Supervisory Review System that monitors compliance with policy including case plan requirements. In addition, case plans are reviewed as part of the administrative review process. Family members are notified of these reviews and their participation is highly encouraged. The Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives conduct a quarterly review of all records including the case plan requirements. A study of case plans from March 1 through August 31, 1998 found that family members were very involved in the case planning process in 35 percent of the cases, somewhat involved in 39 percent of the cases, and not involved at all in 26 percent of cases. All family members signed the case plan in 52 percent of cases, some family members signed in 15 percent of cases, and no family members signed the case plan in 33 percent of the cases.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The case record review found that older youth in Independent Living were involved in case planning.
- From the case record reviews it appeared that Court Social Services staff were more likely than Agency workers to engage parents in case planning activities.
- When the Family Group Decision-Making process was used, the review found that it was a significant avenue to involve families in case planning.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 55 percent of the cases reviewed, child and family involvement in case planning was identified as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- The review found that staff were more focused on completing a document rather than on engaging all the parties involved in the case to develop a workable case plan with realistic goals and expectations of those involved.
- The case record review showed that the Agency lacks case management/coordination between family, service providers, foster parents, children, caseworkers, judges, and attorneys. In some cases this led to confusion about case plan goals and permanency plans.
- In five cases the review found that parents had signed their case plans but were not involved in the actual development of the plans.
- Up-to-date case plans were frequently absent from the case record.
- While some case plans were in the case record, they were not always complete or signed.
- In three cases either parents or children requested services but the services were not included in the case plan.

Item 19. Worker Visits with Children

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	29 (58.00%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	21 (42.00%)
Not Applicable:	0

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency's standards for frequency of contacts between caseworkers and the children and families in their caseloads are consistent with established national standards for best practice and are supported by local legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures. Since the inception of the automated child welfare system, caseworkers have received additional on-line direction in determining frequency of contact through the utilization of the automated structured decision-making instrument consisting of the safety, risk and family needs assessment. The system determines and provides the minimal number of client contacts required (primarily face-to-face contacts during home visits) based upon the level of risk and service needs. Current data from

the automated system regarding frequency of client contacts reflects that a fairly low percentage of caseworkers are able to maintain minimal contact standards. This is due, in part, to data entry/reporting discrepancies. Moreover, an exceptionally high staff turnover rate has had a significant impact on the consistency and quality of service delivery. Infrequent contacts have impacted the identification and provision of appropriate services to families to prevent foster care placement and foster families being connected to the child welfare system longer than necessary.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- In 61 percent of the foster care cases the worker had contact with the child either weekly (24%), bi-weekly (24%), or monthly (52%).
- Service providers reported frequent contacts with children in 25 percent of the foster care cases.
- In four cases contact between the worker and the child took place through frequent telephone calls in addition to the regularly scheduled face-to-face contact.

Areas Needing Improvement:

Worker visits with children was found to be an area needing improvement in 42 percent of the cases reviewed for the following reasons:

- Fifty-five percent of the in-home cases reviewed showed that Agency staff made contact with children in their caseloads less frequently than the policy requires. Only one in-home case had another Agency staff member, volunteer or service provider visit the child.
- Thirty-nine percent of the foster care cases reviewed reported contact between the worker and the child was less than monthly. Forty-five percent of these cases had another Agency staff member, volunteer or service provider visit the child in care.
- The lack of visitation between the worker and the child was often attributed by stakeholders to the high turn over in staff, high caseloads and that intake workers were required to keep children on their caseloads after the initial investigation was completed.

Item 20. Worker Visits with Parents

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	14 (43.75%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	18 (56.25%)
Not Applicable:	18

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The assessment for Item 19, Worker Visits with Children, is also applicable to Item 20, Worker Visits with Parents.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Some of the cases reviewed showed that service providers were in regular contact with the family. These providers often reported back to the Agency about the nature of the contact.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 56 percent of the cases reviewed, worker visits with parents was rated as an area needing improvement due to the following reasons:

- Some cases reviewed had no worker assigned to the case for various periods of time due to such factors as worker turnover and high caseloads, which accounted for very limited or sporadic contact between the Agency and the family.
- The inability of staff to locate some parents in the cases reviewed was also a factor in worker contacts with the family. The Agency did not aggressively search for these parents in an effort to engage them in their children's lives.
- In 68 percent of the in-home cases and 60 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, in which this item was applicable, visitation between the worker and the parents was made less than monthly. In 66 percent of the in-home cases and 83 percent of the foster care cases there were no other Agency staff members, volunteers, or service providers who had contact with the parents.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Forty-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB1. The review found that efforts need to be made in all the areas under this outcome.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The onsite review found that educational assessments were being done in foster care cases and that the educational needs of these children were being addressed through services provided in all of the applicable foster care cases reviewed.
- Educational advocates, who are attorneys appointed by the court, were used in some cases to ensure that children received the educational services they needed.
- In 89 percent of the applicable foster care cases reviewed, the foster parents had been given a copy of the child's educational record.
- The case review found that foster parents were strong advocates for helping their foster children obtain needed educational services.
- Individual Educational Plan meetings are often held at the office so that Agency staff can participate.
- Stakeholder interviews and the case record reviews showed that many older teens in foster care are graduating from high school and are attending vocational programs, or going on to college.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In approximately 21 percent of the cases reviewed, the educational needs of children was rated as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- The educational needs of children who were not in foster care were not addressed in 29 percent of the cases reviewed, particularly those children who were often tardy or absent from school on a frequent basis.
- School records were not found in 45 percent of the in-home cases and 24 percent of the foster care cases reviewed.
- Stakeholders indicated that there are some problems with District children who are placed in Maryland not receiving the special educational services they required due to Maryland school systems not following Individual Education Plans set up while the children were attending school in the District.
- In some of the cases reviewed where educational advocates were not appointed, there was no consistent follow-up by staff on the identified educational needs of children.
- There was no attention given to education in case planning in 13 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 50 percent of the applicable in-home cases reviewed.
- There was no advocacy with the school system to meet the educational needs of the child in 27 percent of the applicable in-home cases and 12 percent of the applicable foster care cases reviewed.
- In 20 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, the child had been enrolled in multiple schools as a result of being placed in foster care.
- Forty percent of the foster care cases reviewed had children who were not in their normal grade placement.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being WB2.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.						
Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:						
	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	9	5	7	6	27	55.10%
Partially Achieved:	4	4	3	1	12	24.49%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	3	1	6	10	20.41%
Not Applicable:	0	0	1	0	1	--

Item 22. Physical Health of Children

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths: 32 (65.31%)
Areas Needing Improvement: 17 (34.69%)
Not Applicable: 1

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The District of Columbia Kids Integrated Delivery System (DC KIDS) was implemented in October 1999. DC KIDS provides medical and mental health examinations consistent with the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) standards. Subsequent to an examination by the primary care physician, the child also receives dental and visual examinations. Approximately 72 percent of agency children are enrolled in DC KIDS. The agency's automated case plan requests staff to gather information on the existence of medical evaluations and the date of completion or planned completion of the medical evaluation. It also requests the child's health insurance number, the identification of the child's primary care physician, the identification of the child's dental provider, and it prompts the worker to provide a description of the child's physical health.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Initial health screenings were done for 77 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed.
- The case record review and stakeholder interviews showed that foster parents were strong advocates for making sure children in their care receive necessary health care services.
- Immunization records were found in 78 percent of the case records of children in foster care and were generally up to date.

Areas Needing Improvement:

In 35 percent of the cases reviewed, this item was rated as an area needing improvement for the following reasons:

- The in-home cases reviewed generally lacked health information in the case record.
- Thirty percent of the in-home cases reviewed showed a lack of follow-up on the identified health needs of children for such medical issues as asthma, allergies, and low birth weight.
- In some of the cases reviewed health care needs for children were not addressed. For example, a child needed a new wheelchair but one was not provided; another child who was born cocaine positive did not have regular health screenings; and a child with a prosthesis required adjustments that were not made.
- In 20 percent of the in-home cases reviewed the child had no preventative health care provided. The Agency had only partially provided preventive health care services to meet the child's needs in 25 percent of the in-home cases reviewed.
- In 53 percent of the in-home cases and 21 percent of the foster care cases reviewed the child had no preventative dental care provided.
- The case review and stakeholder interviews indicated that foster parents were not routinely given a child's medical history when the child was placed with them. This led to several problems. For example, in one case a foster parent did not know the child had a medical condition that needed treatment so the condition went untreated for a period of time; in one case, foster parents were not able to get necessary prescriptions filled; and in another case, foster parents did not have a valid medical card number for the child so that medical appointments could not be made or kept.

Item 23. Mental Health of Children

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Strengths:	28 (65.31%)
Areas Needing Improvement:	15 (34.88%)
Not Applicable:	7

Basis: Statewide Assessment

There are limited data on the mental health needs of children in care and custody. Some data have been generated for planning purposes to address priority issues, e.g. the number of children served by the Department of Mental Health. However, the assumption has been made that all children entering care need at least minimal services due to the trauma of removal and adjustment to a new environment. To assess individual needs, DC KIDS provides a comprehensive behavioral evaluation for each child, age three and older. Subsequent to the evaluation, recommendations for further mental health services are identified and implemented, if needed. These services include psychiatric, psychological, medication management, individual and family therapy, and other services as deemed appropriate.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The review found that initial screenings and psychiatric evaluations were provided to 71 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed.
- Seventy-seven percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed had mental health services that appropriately addressed the child's needs.

Areas Needing Improvement:

The mental health of children was rated as an area needing improvement in 35 percent of the cases reviewed for the following reasons:

- The review found that there was a general lack of mental health services for children who were not in foster care. In addition, the case record reviews and stakeholder interviews identified the need for additional substance abuse treatment services, residential treatment, and placement options for children who needed therapeutic care.

- Inconsistencies were found in the quality of and access to mental health services. For example, Court Social Services cases and Agency cases did not always have comparative access to mental health services for children.
- There was a lack of comprehensive ongoing mental health assessments to assess the needs of children and a failure to monitor progress. For example, in one case a child was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder but no follow-up mental health services were provided by the Agency.
- In 29 percent of the in-home cases reviewed, no assessments or screenings were completed while another 18 percent of the in-home cases reviewed only had partially assessed the child's mental health needs. For example, one child whose mother admitted to abusing alcohol during her pregnancy did not have an evaluation to determine if the child had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effects.
- In 38 percent of the in-home cases and 19 percent of the foster care reviewed, mental health treatment services were not provided to the child at all while an additional 23 percent of the in-home cases and 19 percent of the foster care cases had only partially treated the mental health needs of the children.
- When services were provided, the case record review and stakeholder interviews indicated that there was a lack of progress reports from the providers to the Agency staff.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3 – Not in Substantial Conformity

Fifty-five percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB3.

IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2 X	3	4

Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Beginning in October 1999, the agency's management information system, FACES, became available to all agency staff, and the majority of staff at off-site contract agencies, which provide them with unrestricted access to the database. Staff are able to obtain information on children's demographics, placement location and history, legal status, permanency goals, case plans, court reports, etc. FACES also functions as the agency's official Child Protection Registry. Information of this nature is critical to the agency's ability to carry out its responsibility to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families in the District of Columbia. The FACES system makes such information readily available to social workers, thereby supporting their case management efforts and improving outcomes for clients.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- A new unit has been developed to support data entry to assure foster care and payment data are complete and accurate.
- Case plans are generated online by staff from information gathered in FACES. Supervisors are then able to review and approve these plans in the system.

- System has the capability to track children in foster care throughout placement and is able to provide comprehensive information for each child.
- Workers reported major improvements in FACES especially in the payment of invoices.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Historical information on cases is not captured in FACES.
- Staff do not consistently input data, which contributes to inaccuracies in cases and unreliable information.
- Not all information on sexual abuse cases is in the FACES system because the police department has jurisdiction over sexual abuse cases and does not provide all the necessary information to the Agency.
- Workers identified problems with printing information and reports from the system.
- Access to the system is often difficult. Stakeholders reported that the system was down frequently.
- Court Social Services and Metropolitan Police Department staff do not have access to FACES, which creates gaps in information for some cases.
- Some staff do not use the computerized system but maintain a paper record.
- Staff must rely on the Metropolitan Police Department to inform the Agency of the disposition of cases investigated by the police department. There is currently a backlog of cases investigated by the Metropolitan Police Department.
- Throughout the review process, great difficulty was encountered in obtaining accurate data to use in the review, including generating the data profiles used in the statewide assessment and attempts to resolve discrepancies between information in the statewide assessment and the findings of the onsite review. While the data often appeared to be incomplete or inaccurate, programmatic explanations for the data could not be provided.

Status of Statewide Information System – Not in Substantial Conformity

The Agency has a statewide information system that, at a minimum, has the capacity to identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding twelve months, has been) in foster care. However, there is no assurance that the data generated by the system accurately and completely portray the status, demographic characteristics, location, or goals for the placement of every child who is in foster care.

V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2 X	3	4

Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency's case plan was incorporated into FACES and has been revamped after considerable field-testing. However, 3,000 foster care cases supervised by the District's nine provider agencies are not entered in FACES. Case plans reflect collaborative efforts of the worker and the family. Families are encouraged to be an active partner in the process, when willing and able. Plans are to articulate the dynamics of the family situation and should include a critical analysis of the family situation, an indication of how that situation threatens the safety of the child, and a careful assessment of the approaches and/or resources that could be used to resolve the problems.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Family Group Decision-Making process, when done, is a significant avenue to involve parents, extended family and children in case planning. Currently, this process is only used by the Collaboratives. The Agency has a goal of implementing this system throughout the District by October 2001.
- Older youth in Independent Living were involved in case planning.
- Court Social Services staff were more likely to engage parents in case planning activities.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Case planning was not done consistently by Agency staff.
- Case plans were not found in all records.
- Not all parties involved in a case were consulted when developing the case plan, including children who are of an age to productively participate and foster parents.
- Many case plans entered in FACES did not show parental involvement in the process.
- Different agencies such as the Child and Family Services Agency, Collaboratives, court, private providers, all had different and separate plans for the case. Poor coordination produced duplication of efforts and inconsistent achievement of permanency goals.
- According to interviews with social workers, case planning seemed to occur during supervisory meetings between the worker and his/her supervisor without input from others involved.
- There was a general lack of comprehensive assessments that identified the needs of families and the consequent inability of staff to use this information to develop a more inclusive case plan.
- Although the Agency and Court Social Services staff completed timely initial investigations of abuse and neglect complaints, there was a lack of follow-through found in some of the cases reviewed. In some open cases reports of maltreatment were not investigated as separate complaints.

Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Case plans are reviewed every six months for all children in the agency's physical or legal custody. The Court Social Services Division is required to conduct meetings with caretakers and children within seven days of receiving the case. This begins the assessment process to put into effect the initial case plan ordered by the court at the initial hearing. The status of each child is reviewed periodically but no less frequently than once every six months by either a judicial or administrative review.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency has an Administrative Review unit to conduct case reviews.
- Courts are holding review hearings more frequently than every six months.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Administrative reviews are not occurring in a timely manner for all cases.
- Administrative reviews are often held with only the caseworker and the Administrative Review Unit staff. They typically do not include parents, children, Guardians Ad Litem, or service providers in the review.
- Incomplete information entered into FACES negatively affects the ability of the Agency to meet the case review timelines.

Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The Court's 1997 Court Improvement Program assessment report found that in many cases permanency planning hearings were not being held in a timely manner. In January 2000, the Court established the Remedial Project to review all cases where children have been in out of home placements for more than 15 of the most recent 22 months. A recent study in 2001, on a sampling of open cases in 1999, found 90 percent of the cases had a permanency hearing. However, in 75 percent of those cases, the court record did not accurately reflect the occurrence of permanency hearings, noting a need for improved documentation. In October 1998, the Agency implemented the Permanency Staffing Panel to review cases of children who have been in care 15 out of the most recent 22 months.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- There has been improvement by the courts to conduct permanency hearings every 12 months to review a case's progress in meeting the child's permanency goal.
- There has been a focus on clearly stating objectives parents must accomplish for reunification as well as consequences of not meeting those goals.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Notwithstanding improvements by the Courts to hold permanency hearings every 12 months not all cases had these hearings within the time frame prescribed by the Adoption and Safe Families Act.
- There is a need to more clearly define the roles of those involved in court proceedings. For example, in cases of both abuse and neglect, caseworkers were uncertain if they were to represent the harmed child or if this was the role of a Corporation Counsel attorney.
- When judges are rotated from family court to other courts, such as criminal, they take their cases with them, with the consequence that when they leave family court the pending cases may no longer be a priority.
- Some judges were found to manage all aspects of a cases rather than allowing the Agency to provide case management.

Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Prior to the District of Columbia's implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in 2000, the District was significantly out of compliance regarding termination of parental rights. Children were designated with the goal of adoption; however the agency experienced internal and external reasons that delayed the completion of the termination of parental rights process. The external reasons for the delays in filing the reports was the failure of DC Superior Court to process cases in a

timely manner and the reluctance of counsel, who represented children, to file termination of parental rights reports. The internal issue of the agency came from the delay in staff processing adoption cases due to high staff turnover and unfilled vacancies.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Courts are beginning to hold parents accountable for achieving objectives in the case plan.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Courts generally do not terminate parental rights until an adoptive family has been identified for the child. This practice delays adoptions and reduces the chances or opportunities for some children to be adopted.
- The termination of parental rights requirement for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months was not implemented in the District until 2000.
- The review found that when termination of parental rights was not considered in a timely manner it led to substantial delays in permanency in some cases.

Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

When a child is removed from the home, the police department will provide notice of the time and place of the initial hearing. For subsequent hearings, actual notice is provided to everyone in attendance. Non-party caretakers or relatives are often present at these hearings. Those included in the hearings are parents whose legal counsel may accompany them to the hearing. Also included in the hearing are children over the age of ten, foster parents, and staff of the Court Social Services Division.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Judges solicit input from pre-adoptive parents at hearings when parents attend.
- FACES has the capacity to capture the required information on parties who should receive notification of a case review or hearing.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Foster parents, relative caretakers and pre-adoptive parents are not consistently notified of reviews which indicates there is a breakdown in communication in the pre- administrative review process where it is determined who is to be involved in the review. Similarly, there sometimes is a communication gap in notifying these caregivers and prospective caregivers of the time and place of a hearing until the eleventh hour, if at all.

Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity

The review found that the District needs improvement in all five of the case review system factors measured.

VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3 X	4

Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The District conducted several quality control audits of foster care payments and adoption subsidy record keeping and payments, as well as random, unannounced samplings of various program units. This activity led to standards being developed for the new monitoring model and internal audit controls with the emphasis on the number and location of children in care, reliability and safety with respect to caretakers, and the identification of frequent changes and over capacity in foster home settings. In April 1999, the Office of Quality Assurance and LaShawn Compliance was created incorporating Corrective Action staff who have been focusing on the nine corrective action categories in the Court's Modified Final Order dealing with children with certain permanency goals placed for an inordinate period of time. In the fall of 2000, these functions were assimilated into the newly created Office of Planning, Policy and Program Support. This reorganization more closely integrates the assessment and remediation streams of agency activity. Quality assurance components have had a positive impact on assuring standards are met by assisting with the development and implementation of corrective action strategies and the development of new standards. Not all standards and procedures are currently in place.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The District has developed licensing standards for foster and adoptive placements that regulate the health and safety of children placed in these homes and facilities. The Quality Assurance Unit is charged with monitoring compliance of these licensing standards. The unit identifies changes that should be implemented and develops corrective action plans to remedy deficiencies found in case reviews.
- Health and safety appears to be a priority in casework practice which is evident by the emphasis given to the Supervisory Review System, which monitors compliance with the Agency and Federal policy and legislative child welfare requirements. Supervisors use a questionnaire that measures technical compliance to ensure the quality of service delivery.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The review found that front line supervisors do not always provide adequate guidance for workers on case management, critical case events, and outcomes.
- Although the Agency completed timely initial investigations of abuse and neglect complaints, there was a lack of follow-through found in some of the cases reviewed. In some open cases subsequent reports of maltreatment were not investigated as separate complaints.

Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The Supervisory Review System (SRS), a multi-tiered evaluation process, allows the agency to advance toward quality improvements. Presently, quality assurance is in the preliminary research phase of developing a case formula that is anticipated would replace a quantitative caseload with a qualitative workload. DC Superior Court Division of Social Services

has a basic quality assurance system that fits their needs. The Court Social Services Division meets the service standards in the bifurcated mode of employing hands-on supervisory system. The conversion of case data to FACES is a concern. FACES staff continue to implement and upgrade the system but the production of consistent and timely data in special deadline matters continues to be problematic.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency provides comprehensive oversight of the Collaboratives, which includes case reviews; monitoring of fiscal and administrative practices; and monthly, quarterly and annual reports. The Agency provides feedback to the Collaboratives, which is then used to improve practice.
- The Agency has a structured process for supervisors to review cases.
- The Agency is implementing a system of continuous quality improvement. This system will be integrated into the work of the Office of Planning, Policy and Program Support to more closely incorporate quality improvement measures into program enhancements.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- In some of the cases reviewed there was nothing in the case record that showed that the administrative review process took place. For example, there is supposed to be a system of checks and balances where the social workers and supervisors go over the case plan, which sometimes also involves parents, and then designated Agency administrative personnel review the process to be sure that the appropriate procedures were followed.
- FACES does not provide supervisors with a checklist or notice for actions that are due for cases in their units.

Status of Quality Assurance System – Substantial Conformity

The Agency has a system in place to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. However, the Agency was found to need improvements in their Supervisory Review System's implementation.

VII. TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2 X	3	4

Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.

____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency has a contractual partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work, which subcontracts with Howard University and Catholic University. Training for agency contract agencies is provided to those working in congregate and family-based foster care.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The comprehensive new worker training curriculum is targeted toward teaching critical child welfare skills.
- Training on the FACES system follows the Agency's new worker training.
- According to agency policy, new workers are not assigned cases until they complete the mandatory 80 hours of pre-service training and have obtained a social work license.
- New workers and attorneys, along with court staff, receive cross-training on specific legal issues.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The review found that in practice there were significant time lags between the date a new worker is hired and when pre-service training is provided due to supervisors assigning cases to new workers.
- In practice, because of heavy workloads and high staff turnover, supervisors often call new workers out of training to handle on-going caseload activities.
- Workers identified a need for more training on Agency policy and casework practice.
- High worker turnover burdens the training unit's ability to provide the necessary pre-service training for all new staff.

Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.

_____ Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Ongoing training is provided to all levels of social work staff at the agency, the Collaboratives, and all agencies under contract to provide placement services to children in the agency's care. Training is also provided to Court Social Services Division staff who will become agency employees on October 1, 2001. There is pre-service training on managing child abuse cases, such as making referrals, developing custody orders, and removing children in emergency situations. Prospective foster/kinship parents and adoptive parents are trained separately.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- A variety of ongoing training, consisting of 24 to 48 hours from a curriculum of 27 to 30 different subject areas, is available for staff to keep them current on new legislation and policy.
- New supervisors receive a 12 session introductory course. A training course is also available for staff to determine if supervision is right for them.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Interviews with Agency staff revealed that the competency-based training for supervisors is not mandatory and, therefore, is not consistently utilized.
- Interviews with Collaboratives and Agency staff indicated that there was a lack of specialized training for staff on the use of risk assessments, case planning, permanency, and engaging families in the child welfare process. Those interviewed attributed this problem to in-service training not being mandatory.
- Stakeholders indicated a need to have a current understanding of new legislation such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the policy developed as result of this legislation. The training curriculum should be designed to provide this information specifically for stakeholders.
- Because of heavy workloads and high staff turnover, supervisors do not always support attendance at in-service training of those whom they supervise, which can have a negative effect on job performance since staff may not receive all the necessary information.

Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Starting in February 2000 training has been offered to foster care/kinship parents, i.e. in-service workshops on substance abuse, first aid, CPR, and parenting skills.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- A comprehensive pre-service training curriculum is provided to all new foster and adoptive parents.
- The Agency's Foster Parent Resource Unit provides a variety of training sessions for foster and adoptive parents to meet the 15-hour in-service training requirement.
- All contract agency staff are required to attend foster and adoptive parent pre-service training.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents emphasizes the team approach to providing care for the District's children. Because Agency staff do not receive this training, the review found that some foster and adoptive parents are not included as members of the team when making decisions about children. Interviews with foster parents revealed that this issue was a point of contention.

Status of Training – Not in Substantial Conformity

The District was found to have strengths in the area of a training system for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of licensed or approved facilities. The review found a need for improvement in the staff development and training program and on-going training for staff.

VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3 X	4

Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency offers an array of services designed to prevent out of home placement, reunify families, and finalize adoptions. The District provides services intended to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children and to stabilize families. These services include intensive home-based crisis intervention services, homemaker services, parent education, family counseling, anger management classes, post-reunification support, mental health and substance abuse programs, housing assistance, respite care, medical services, and others. The agency works closely with other local government agencies to develop and coordinate services for children in its care. In its commitment to improving the quality of life for children and families in the District of Columbia, the agency collaborates regularly with a variety of community-based private, non-profit agencies such as member agencies of the Consortium for Child Welfare and the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives, which provide services to families and children known to the agency.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The District has a variety of services available to support children and families including home based services, Families Together, Collaboratives, educational advocates, independent living services, etc.
- Mentoring is utilized to deal with those families where specific problem areas have been identified by the Agency.
- Vocational training and college opportunities are available for older youth in care.
- Ferebee Hope is the Agency's multi-purpose services center. It is located in the community and provides a variety of services such as crisis intervention, medical services, housing, in-home services, etc. to Child Protective Services families.
- With the \$37.5 million dollar budget increase, the Agency developed new services to meet emerging needs. These services included substance abuse treatment, mental health services, respite for foster parents, family group conferencing, etc. The Agency also tapped existing resources to fill service gaps since services were not previously available to meet the needs of all families and foster parents.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The review found a need for a comprehensive and up-to-date provider directory so that staff, attorneys, and advocates know what services are available in the communities to support families.
- Interviews with stakeholders indicated that there was a general lack of mental health services, services to transition youth from residential care to community-based placements, and services for children with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.
- The District was found to have inadequate inpatient substance abuse treatment facilities for mothers and their children.
- Housing is a major need for families in the District even though there are Section 8 certificates available for families who qualify.
- Medicaid coverage for children placed in Maryland is a problem.
- The case record review and stakeholder interviews indicated a need for additional post-adoption support services for families who have adopted foster children from the District.

Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Services are available to all children and families in the District of Columbia. In 1998, the agency established eight Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives to coordinate and implement citywide child welfare services across Washington DC's neighborhoods. These Collaboratives are comprised of private and public partners to enable the agency to implement services on a very localized level.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Services provided by the Community Collaboratives are available in all four quadrants of the city, which makes them readily accessible to clients through the District's comprehensive public transportation system. In addition, some of the Collaboratives have vans to transport clients to appointments.
- Funding for services provided by the Community Collaboratives has increased to \$6.9 million dollars in FY 2001 and is expected to be higher in FY 2002. This funding increase provides more services to families across the District.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Individuals often wait up to 24 hours in the waiting room for substance abuse treatment services.

Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Social workers must complete a comprehensive family assessment that addresses the family's structure, strengths, motivation to reunify, level of internal and external support available to the family, the stressors that impede the family's functioning, the nature and quality of family relationships, substance abuse history, child rearing practices, current and future parenting capabilities, and the family's commitment to the child and the specific behavior that should be modified to assure the child's safety. They must also develop a written case plan along with a detailed service agreement with the family.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Community Collaboratives individualize services to meet the specific needs of their families. Collaboratives utilize individualized assessments to develop services plans that meet the needs of the children and families they serve.

Areas Needing Improvement:

The review found that the Agency sometimes offers a set of services to all families rather than individualizing services to meet the specific needs of their clients.

Status of Service Array – Substantial Conformity

The review found that the District provides services in all areas of the City and that these services can be individualized to meet the needs of the children and families served by the Agency. However, the review found that there was a general lack of specific services to meet targeted needs of some of the Agency's clients, especially in terms of substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and housing.

IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3 X	4

Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The District has been moderately successful in gathering input into the State's Child and Family Services Plan from external stakeholders and quite successful in implementing the desired services as outlined in the plan. Participation in the plan was limited primarily due to the many changes mandated by the external requirements of the Modified Order of 1993 and the Consent Order of October 2000. These mandates assured participation with other entities to achieve client outcomes, but not necessarily with the development of the State Plan. The Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives participate in the agency's annual strategic planning process to provide input in establishing goals and objectives for the following year.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The community is an integral part of developing and implementing the provisions of the Agency's Child and Family Services Plan. Stakeholders indicated that Community Collaboratives participate in planning and coordinating local services as specified in the Plan.
- As part of the Agency's planning process for the Annual Progress and Services Report, the Collaboratives have input into establishing goals and objectives for the following year.

- Citizens Review Panel members, which consists of citizens, para-professionals, community activists, public and private organizations, assisted with the development of the Child and Family Services Plan.
- The Agency is increasing consultation and collaboration with service providers, courts, the Department of Education, and the District's mental health agency through regular meetings and other avenues. An example of this collaboration is seen in the regular meetings with staff of the Agency and the Department of Mental Health to develop a plan to serve children and families by providing wrap-around and in-home services, crisis intervention, as well as intensive day and rehabilitation services.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- There was a lack of cooperation between the Agency and housing agencies and the Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities community. Stakeholder interviews and the case record review revealed a shortage of housing in the District. Agency staff indicated that Child Protective Services families are no longer a priority for housing.
- The review found that the Agency would benefit from stronger citizen participation in the Child and Family Services Planning process.

Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency funds the Collaboratives on a yearly basis. These Collaboratives are responsible for submitting proposals that address the needs of their respective communities, children, and families. Services are identified on community input, past service delivery, and agency needs. Collaborative representatives are given the opportunity to explain their service needs and articulate to the agency how the services meet the needs of their customers and stakeholders. The Office of Planning, Policy and Program Support has recently sent a questionnaire to stakeholders, private providers, staff, and customers to gather data on needs that will help evaluate the agency's progress and future direction in achieving positive outcomes.

The District is in compliance with the requirement for submitting an Annual Progress and Services Report for child welfare services each year on June 30th.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Outside public and private agencies are engaged in contributing to the Annual Progress and Services Report for Title IV-B. The eight Community Collaboratives report to the Agency annually on services they provided and identify service needs in the community.
- The Collaboratives and the Agency hold an annual joint retreat to discuss ways to improve the quality of services delivered to families.
- The Citizens Review Panel offers input and suggestions for effective service delivery through the development of reports on services provided to families.

Areas Needing Improvement:

None identified.

Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.

 Strength X Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Over the past two years, the District of Columbia has begun to create relationships with other District government and private service agencies that play a role in providing holistic services to families. There are Memorandums of Understanding and agreements with the Department of Health, the Day Care Division, the Office of Early Childhood Development, and other programs and agencies including the Housing Authority and the Task Force for the Homeless.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency is currently coordinating with organizations that provide Federal benefits and services such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Departments of Education, Mental Health, and Housing and Urban Development. This is an effort to assure that families receive all the services for which they may be eligible.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Stakeholder interviews revealed that the Agency needs to better coordinate with Medicaid, mental health, and services provided to individuals with Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities.

Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community – Substantial Conformity

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of engaging in on-going consultation with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the court, and other agencies in implementing provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan. In addition, the Agency develops annual reports of progress and services with input from these stakeholders. The Child and Family Services Agency needs to better coordinate with external agencies such as Medicaid, mental health, and the Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities providers.

X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3 X	4

Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and childcare institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.

X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

In the past, the agency established and maintained standards for foster and adoptive homes in the District of Columbia. The agency's relationship with Maryland and Virginia were cordial and consequently, the District could study and approve foster and adoptive homes in those states. Both foster and adoptive home studies completed by the agency in Maryland and Virginia were subject to the same agency standards as were studies of homes in the District itself. As a result of agency restructuring and the Adoption and Safe Families Act legislation, there have been several changes in the licensing and approval process for foster and adoptive homes. The agency currently collaborates with the Department of Health to license District foster homes while adoptive homes receive certificates of approval. As of October 1999, foster/adoptive placement resources located in Maryland and Virginia can no longer be studied and approved by agency staff. Homes for District children that are located in Maryland must be studied and approved by the agency's private vendors who are licensed in Maryland. The same situation has occurred with homes in Virginia. Consequently, there is no longer a clear agency established guideline maintained across state lines. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is used for placements of District children in other states. Therefore, Maryland standards apply to families residing in Maryland, Virginia standards apply to families residing in Virginia, and agency guidelines apply to families living in the District. The agency's Permanency and Placement Administration does not have any data regarding how effective the District has been in meeting the State plan requirement of ensuring that the State's licensure standards are applied equally to all foster and adoptive homes and child care institutions that serve children in the District's custody. However, it is important to note that the agency has had the responsibility of monitoring and maintaining licensure requirements of homes in other states through the Interstate Compact.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency currently licenses foster homes and certifies adoptive homes using standards that conform to nationally recognized requirements.
- The Agency has started to approve foster/adoptive homes through private agencies located in Virginia and Maryland.
- The Foster Parent Support Unit provides vital support to foster parents in the District. This unit facilitates contact between the child's worker and the foster parent, makes sure families' certifications are up to date, helps families develop links to their communities for support services, etc.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The review found that respite care and liability insurance for foster parents is needed.

Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

See the response to Item 41.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Interviews with stakeholders and foster parents confirmed that standards for foster homes are equally applied to all homes including relatives who are providing care for the District's children.

Areas Needing Improvement:

None identified.

Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

Prior to the 1999 passage of the District of Columbia's Adoption and Safe Families Act, foster and adoptive parent applications and all adult members of their households were required to have both a Child Protection Register clearance and a police clearance as part of the home study. A check of the Armed Services Register was also required for any person with a military background. After the 1999 passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in the District, legal guardians, kinship caregivers, and other individuals with whom a child is placed by court order and adult residents in their homes were added to those required to complete criminal records and child protection registry clearances as a part of the home study process. In addition to the local police clearance, these individuals are now required to have national clearances through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These clearances are now required from every state in which the individual has resided or worked from the time the individual was 18 years of age. The requirement now also applies to any adult who moves into a home after placement of a child within 10 calendar days of that move. Additionally, these clearances must be repeated once every three years as part of a re-approval process for foster homes. Currently state requirements may not be applied consistently to foster, adoptive or kinship care families which reside in Maryland or Virginia as there may be variations in recruitment and home studies regarding how FBI clearances are conducted in those states.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- Interviews with Agency staff, stakeholders, and the Foster Parent Support Unit confirmed that local criminal background checks as well as Federal Bureau of Investigation background checks are completed for all homes.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Some kinship homes in Prince George's County, Maryland do not currently have background clearances. Interviews with Agency staff reported that the agency is currently working with Maryland to bring these homes into compliance.

Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

The agency utilizes a variety of methods to publicize not only the ongoing need for foster and adoptive families, but also the need for families for specific children. The following primary methods are used: radio and television, newspapers, printed materials, community outreach and religious community outreach.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency has implemented several programs to recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care. These programs include One Church, One Child to recruit African-American families through the faith community; My Community, My Child developed by Casey Family Services to recruit foster and adoptive families in the communities in which children are from; the Community Awareness and Recruitment Summit held by local foster parents to educate the community and recruit prospective parents; and the AKIN (All Kids In Need) program that provides support for kinship, foster and adoptive families.
- Some residents of the District would like to be foster parents but do not meet all of the home licensing requirements. The Community Collaboratives are helping these residents to meet the requirements through assistance such as removing lead paint from their homes.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- The current pool of foster and adoptive families is inadequate to meet the placement needs of children.
- According to interviews with foster parents, the lack of support services for foster families in the District, such as respite care, has caused a problem with retaining the families that are recruited by the Agency.

Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

 X Strength Area Needing Improvement

Basis: Statewide Assessment

In the District of Columbia metropolitan area, many recruited adoptive caretakers reside in Maryland and Virginia. These caretakers include both relatives of agency clients and unrelated residents that are interested in fostering and adopting. As of April 2000, the agency lists children who are free for adoption on the Internet. The response has been positive. The use of private agencies to license and approve prospective caretakers has significantly reduced the time that it takes to receive a home

study through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. This process has resulted in an increase in the number of children placed into licensed adoptive homes outside of DC.

Basis: Onsite Review

Strengths:

- The Agency routinely places children for adoption in surrounding states because of the limited availability of adoptive families in the District.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Because the District of Columbia adjoins two states, the regulations governing the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children have been a barrier to the timely placement of children in surrounding states for adoption.

Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention – Substantial Conformity

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of implementing standards for foster homes and childcare institutions; equally applying standards to all approved foster homes and childcare institutions; ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care; and for effectively using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

Safety	Child and Family Well-Being	<u>Y</u> Quality Assurance System
<u>Y</u> Outcome S1	<u>N</u> Outcome WB1	<u> </u> Item 30
<u> </u> Item 1	<u> x </u> Item 17	<u> x </u> Item 31
<u> </u> Item 2	<u> x </u> Item 18	<u>N</u> Training
<u>N</u> Outcome S2	<u> x </u> Item 19	<u> x </u> Item 32
<u> x </u> Item 3	<u> x </u> Item 20	<u> x </u> Item 33
<u> x </u> Item 4	<u>N</u> Outcome WB2	<u> </u> Item 34
	<u> x </u> Item 21	<u>Y</u> Service Array
Permanency	<u>N</u> Outcome WB3	<u> x </u> Item 35
<u>N</u> Outcome P1	<u> x </u> Item 22	<u> </u> Item 36
<u> x </u> Item 5	<u> x </u> Item 23	<u> </u> Item 37
<u> x </u> Item 6		<u>Y</u> Agency Responsiveness to the Community
<u> x </u> Item 7	Systemic Factors	<u> </u> Item 38
<u> x </u> Item 8	<u>N</u> Statewide Information System	<u> </u> Item 39
<u> x </u> Item 9	<u> x </u> Item 24	<u> x </u> Item 40
<u> x </u> Item 10	<u>N</u> Case Review System	<u>Y</u> Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
<u>N</u> Outcome P2	<u> x </u> Item 25	<u> </u> Item 41
<u> </u> Item 11	<u> x </u> Item 26	<u> </u> Item 42
<u> </u> Item 12	<u> x </u> Item 27	<u> </u> Item 43
<u> x </u> Item 13	<u> x </u> Item 28	<u> </u> Item 44
<u> </u> Item 14	<u> x </u> Item 29	<u> </u> Item 45
<u> </u> Item 15		
<u> x </u> Item 16		

REVIEW DISCREPANCIES

Federal regulations at 45 CFR 1355.33(d) provide procedures for the resolution of discrepancies between information in the statewide assessment and the findings of the onsite portion of the review. These discrepancies can be resolved by either the submission of additional information or the review of additional cases. During the course of the review, three discrepancies were identified.

Permanency Outcome #1, Item 5. - Foster Care Re-Entries

The Agency's aggregate data of 22.26 percent did not meet the national standard of 8.6 percent for those children who re-entered foster care within twelve months of a prior foster care episode. However, the onsite review determined that all twenty-eight foster care cases, or 100 percent of the applicable cases, were rated as a strength on this performance measure. The Agency re-ran the 1999 FOCUS data and determined the percentage had not changed. They then ran additional 2000 data from FACES and determined they would meet the national standard if the 2000 FACES data was substituted for the 1999 FACES data. The Agency was required to submit AFCARS data for 2000 based on the 2000 FACES data. However, the data appeared to be incomplete or inaccurate. Since programmatic explanations for the data could not be provided, this indicator was rated as an area in need of improvement.

Permanency Outcome #1, Item 6. - Stability of Foster Care Placements

The Agency exceeded the national standard of 86.7 percent for children who have had no more than two placement settings within twelve months of the latest home removal with 94.66 percent. However, the onsite review found that only twenty cases out of twenty-eight, or 71.43 percent, were rated as a strength for this performance measure. The Agency submitted additional data for this indicator but did not request an additional case review. Consequently, this indicator was rated as an area in need of improvement.

Permanency Outcome #1, Item 9. - Adoption

The Agency exceeded the national standard of 32 percent for children who exited care to a finalized adoption in less than twenty-four months from the time of the latest removal from home with 39.01 percent. However, the onsite review found that only five out of eight cases, or 62.5 percent, were rated as a strength for this indicator with forty-two cases determined to be not applicable for this item. The Agency felt an additional case record review would not result in conformity with the on-site review standard of 90 percent. Consequently this indicator was rated as an area in need of improvement.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Review determined that the Agency is not operating in substantial conformity in six of the outcome areas and two of the systemic factors. A Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is required to address each outcome and systemic factor determined to not be in substantial conformity. The PIP must include measures to bring each outcome and systemic factor up to a level of substantial conformity and bring the statewide data indicators up to the national standard (or the amount of progress negotiated by the Agency and the Regional Office).

The major elements of the PIP must include the priority assigned to the Agency's work on each area of non-conformity, the necessary action steps associated with improving each area of non-conformity, identification of the individuals responsible for carrying out the various steps, and establishment of time frames for carrying-out the required improvements. Safety outcomes determined not to be in substantial conformity must be given priority in the PIP and addressed in less than two years. The PIP must be submitted to the Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days of receipt of the final summary of findings report. The Regional Administrator will review the PIP and notify the Agency as to approval or disapproval. If the PIP is not approved, the Agency will have thirty days to submit a revised PIP.

FISCAL PENALTY

Penalties will be deferred while the Agency implements its Program Improvement Plan. The Agency is held accountable for meeting the milestones detailed in the PIP and ultimately completing the Plan successfully. The Regional Office will assess penalties commensurate with the extent of the non-compliance if the Agency does not meet the milestones set forth in or does not complete the PIP. The potential penalty the Agency may accrue is one percent for each outcome measure and each systemic factor determined not to be in substantial conformity. A total of fourteen percent of the pool of the Agency's IV-B allotment and ten percent of the Agency's claims for Title IV-E administrative costs for the year under review. In this Review the Agency was found to not be in substantial conformity in six outcomes and three systemic factors for a total of nine percent of the penalty pool.

States that are determined to be in nonconformity on the basis of a second full review will be assessed a penalty increased to two percent for each outcome and systemic factor that continues in nonconformity for a maximum of twenty-eight percent of the State's penalty pool. The second full review will be conducted two years after the approval of the Program Improvement Plan.

The District's penalty calculation is as follows:

Title IV-B Allotment for 2001

Subpart 1	\$ 302,253
Subpart 2	<u>\$1,095,861</u>
Total	\$1,398,114

IV-E Administrative Costs for FY 2001 (estimated)

	\$13,255,374
	<u>x 10%</u>
Total	\$1,325,537

Total Penalty Pool = \$ 2,723,651

Total Estimated Penalty (9%) = \$ 245,129

NONDISCRIMINATION

In reviewing policy materials relative to the programs under review, a concern was identified with the Adoption Resource Program policy on guidelines for selection of an adoptive home which notes, under item 6. Ethnicity and Race, that the Agency prefers to place children in families that reflect their ethnicity or race. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. The Interethnic Provisions (IEP) of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, Part II, Subtitle H, Section 1808 (Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption) became effective on August 20, 1996. Section 1808 amended or repealed key provisions of the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), including the language which permitted consideration of race in adoption and foster care decisions as one of several factors used to determine the best interests of a child. Section 1808 retains the MEPA prohibition against denying or delaying placement for adoption or foster care based on the race of the child or prospective adoptive or foster parent.

This concern was referred to the Regional Office for Civil Rights (OCR) who, along with the Administration for Children and Families, has responsibility for enforcing Section 1808. OCR will be conducting a review of the Agency to determine whether the District's laws, regulations, policies and procedures are in compliance.